Buddhist-Muslim Encounter in Sind during the Eighth Century

Conference Paper · October 2015

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Abstract
After the conquest of Sind in 711 CE, the Arabs showed little inclination to interfere with either of the two major non-Muslim religions of Sind– Buddhism and Hinduism– the policy of the Arabs generally focused on the submission of the Sindīs and not their conversion. Still, nearly the Buddhists converted to Islam. Buddhism, unlike Hinduism, tended in Sind to be vitally associated with the mercantile sector of the economy. The incorporation of Sind into the rapidly expanding trade empire of the Arabs had important implications for Buddhism. With their long history of trade relationships with Central Asia and China, the urban, mercantile Buddhists of Sind appear to have felt that collaboration with the Arabs would open commercial opportunities for them in the Arab eastern front. And also would indirectly help their religion. In other words, they appear to have had good reason to perceive that their mercantile interests would be better served under an Arab trade empire (perhaps one allied with Tibet) than under an isolationist Brāhmaṇa dynasty with little interest in a regularized inter-regional commerce. While the inter-regional commerce cycled through Sind did revive during the Arab period, it was a trade with several critical, interrelated differences, at least from the perspective of the mercantile Buddhists. The Buddhist ability to process the articles of inter-regional trade was affected by both the decline in their control of this commerce and the competition offered by the new Arab facilities. Muslims displaced Buddhists as the dominant urban, mercantile class in Sind and the pan-Islamic international trade network to which Sind became linked by conquest was controlled mostly by the Muslim mercantile bourgeoisie. Discriminatory customs regulations further diminished the ability of the Buddhist merchants of Sind to compete equally with Muslims in large-scale inter-regional commerce. As a result of these factors, Sindī Buddhist merchants found it increasingly difficult to compete with Muslim merchants on an equal footing in the revived commerce. In this paper, an attempt has been made to show that converting to Islam was felt as a plausible option by these Buddhists experiencing relative deprivation in Arab Sind.

Key words: Buddhism, Islam, Muslim, Conversion, Jizyah.

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Apart from scanty archaeological information, Bilādurī,[1] *Chachnāmah*,[2] and *Tārīkh-i-M'asūmī*[3] are the primarily sources of information on the Buddhist-Muslim encounter in Sind[4] during the eighth and ninth centuries. Most of the textual source material is fragmentary, one-sided, and sometimes even contradictory. Due to these handicaps, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to paint a comprehensibly clear historical picture of the period under consideration.

In 711 CE, al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, an extremely capable but ruthless governor of the easternmost provinces of the Umayyad Empire, sent his seventeen-year old nephew and son-in-law, General Muḥammad ibn Qāsim ath-Thaqafī, with twenty thousand troops, to invade Sind both from the sea and by land. On the eve of this invasion, rural Sind was largely populated by Hindu communities. It is noteworthy that during the pre-modern period the Buddhists and the Hindus did not see themselves as

[1] *Kitāb Futūḥ al Buldān* of ʾAḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Jābir, also known as al-Bilādhurī or Balādurī, a ninth century Persian historian, is the earliest account of the Arab conquests in the eighth century. Though the chapter on Sind is systematic, it occupies only about a dozen pages of the original text. See Elliot and Dowson 1867: 113-130.
[2] The Sindī chronicle *Chachnāmah* (Persian*: Čač-nāme*) of 1216 by Alī ibn Hāmid al-Kūfī claims to be the Persian translation of a lost Arab original dealing with the history of the Arab conquest of Sind. Its translation has been done by many hands, for instance, Fredunbeg 1900; and Elliot and Dowson 1867: 131-211.
[3] It was written by Mīr Muḥammad Masūm Shāh of Bhakkar in the year1600. Its first chapter, based on the *Chachnāmah,* gives an account of the Arab conquest of Sind. However, it does not really add anything new to the information already available in the *Chachnāmah*.
[4] Arab Sind covered the territories of present-day Pakistani provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan, and Punjab.

collections of mutually exclusive and antagonistic religious communities.[5] In fact, at the popular level, Hindus generally saw Buddhism as another form of their own religion. Buddhists, most of whom were merchants, traders, bankers, financiers, and artisans, lived in the urban areas. Within the urban settlements, these Buddhists were mainly confined to lower Sind with main concentrations in central Indus delta, west bank of the Indus (the region termed Budhīyah at the time of the Arab conquest), and an elongated belt extending along the east bank of the Indus from Mīrpur Khās in the southeast to Sirār, just south of Aror (Roruka, capital of Sovīra).[6] Overwhelming majority of Sindī Buddhists owed their allegiance to the Saṃmitīya sect[7] of the Hīnayāna school.[8] When Xuanzang travelled through Sind, about seventy years before Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, he saw that more than 10,000 Buddhist monks living in the *vihāras* were "mostly indolent people with a corrupt character."[9] According to him, "beside the Sindhu River there live several hundred, nearly a thousand, families of ferocious people who made slaughtering their occupation and sustain themselves by rearing cattle, without any other means of living. All the people, whether male or female, and regardless of nobility or lowliness, shave off their hair and beards and dress in religious robes, thus giving the appearance of being *bhikṣus* (and *bhikṣunīs),* yet engaging in secular affairs. They persistently hold Hīnayāna views and slander Mahāyāna teachings."[10] Xuanzang further points out that after the arrival of an Arhat, the people of Sind had given up their evil ways. "But after the lapse of a long time and the changes of the world, they became imperfect in doing good deeds and returned to their evil habits. Although they were dressed in religious robes, they did not observe the disciplinary rules."[11]

The volume and importance of interregional commerce which was the mainstay of Sindī economy had begun to decline in the period immediately before the Arab conquest. International events, over which the Sindī Buddhists had little or no control, negatively affected the transit trade from Central Asia and China, especially the trade in silk. For instance, when sericulture became introduced in the Byzantine Empire, it "drastically reduced whatever remained of the shrunken foreign commerce of North-Western India in Gupta times."[12] By the sixth century CE, the Sasanians had begun to almost single-handedly control the maritime as well as land trade routes towards the West. Consequently, the ports of Sind and the Red Sea suffered greatly.[13] Sindī economy was particularly affected with the loss of Sind's advantageous geographic position that had extended over several important trade routes. Though trading was still taking place between India, China, and the West, it was primarily taking place through the sea via the Strait of Malacca and Sri Lanka. Since the major economic advantage of Sind lay in the location of its riverine system and seaports as the closest maritime transport to the land trade route, the changed situation worked largely to the disadvantage of Sind. Sind was particularly affected as its commerce was specifically dependent on the transit trade. While this was happening, feudalization of Sind further reduced the importance of interregional trade to the overall Sindī economy.[14] Because of its earlier and broader dependence on transit trade,

[5] Likewise, the rulers were non- communal. For instance, according to Xuanzang, the king of Sind, "a Śūdra by caste, [wa]s a man of simplicity and honesty, and he respect[ed] the Buddha-dharma" (Li 1996: 346). Though religious institutions were not outside the purview and jurisdiction of the state, concept of a 'state religion' being foreign to the Indian mind, these institutions remained mostly unmolested. In spite of some stray incidents resulting from the heat of sectarian rivalry here and there, there are no reliable examples of any purposive and sustained persecution of religious minorities much less a crusade or a *jehād* in India. As Amartya Sen puts it aptly, "India has been especially fortunate in having a long tradition of public arguments, with toleration of intellectual heterodoxy" (Sen 2005: 12).

[6]See Maclean 1989: 7.

[7]The Saṃmitīya sect, an offshoot of the Vātsīputrīya sect, claimed that *pudgala* (person) as a carrier of *skandhas* (aggregates) endures.

[8]Li. *op. cit.,* 345; Takakusu 1896: 14. According to Maclean, as many as 350 of a total of 450 Buddhist *vihāras* in Sind belonged to the Saṃmitīya sect (Maclean 1989: 8, 154).

[9]Li 1996: 345-346.

[10]*Ibid*.346.

[11]*Ibid*.

[12]Sharma 1965: 68.

[13]Needham 1965: 185-187 and Maity 1970: 175-181 have noted the impact of Sassanian commerce on Indian and Chinese economies.

[14]For details on Indian feudalism see Sharma 1965; Gopal 1965; Coulborn1967-68.

feudalism in Sind, it seems, was far more panoptic than in other parts of the Indian subcontinent. Major Buddhist *vihāras* were located on the Silk Road that connected China to the ports of Sind. Besides housing artisans, these *vihāras* provided capital loans, storage and resting facilities to merchants. These merchants and artisans were the chief financial patrons of the *vihāras*. As Buddhist monasteries were dependent upon merchants and artisans for support, loss of business by the latter must have affected the former. Thus, it is not surprising that Xuanzang witnessed ruins of monasteries in Sind.[15]

Before Islam was taken beyond the Arabian Peninsula, Indians and their major religions were not unknown to the Arabs. Some Indian communities, especially Jats (Arabic: *Zut*) had already been living near Bahrain and present-day Basra. Aisha, the Prophet's wife, is said to have been once treated by a Jat physician. In fact, it has been suggested by H.A. Qadir in his well-researched work *Buddha the Great: His Life and Philosophy* (Arabic: *Budha al-Akbar Hayatoh wa Falsaftoh*) that the reference in the *Qur'ān* to the fig tree and to the Prophet Dhu'l-Kifl (meaning "the One from Kifl,")[16] refers to Śākyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment at the foot of one.[17] The *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk,* also known as *Tārīkh-i-Ṭabarī,* by Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, an early tenth century reconstruction of the early history of Islam, talks of the presence in Arabia of *ahmaras* ('Red-Clad People') from Sind. Three of them, who were undoubtedly saffron-robed Buddhist monks, reportedly explained philosophical teachings to the Arabs towards the beginning of the Islamic era.[18] Sindīs were also not completely unaware of Islam. For instance, a practising Muslim, Muḥammad Alāfī, along with 500 Arab warriors, had already been working in the army of King Dāhir.[19]

It has been suggested that the reason behind the invasion of Sind was King Dāhir's patronage to Med pirates who had looted some Arab ships coming from Lanka and also because he had given asylum to an Arab renegade leader, Alāfī and his 500 companions.[20] Loot and the necessity of keeping the in-fighting Arabs occupied elsewhere, is also sometimes given as a reason behind the invasion. According to Francesco Gabrieli, "whatever the *casus belli* may have been at that time … ambitious eastward expansion of Arabia and Islam"[21] was the *raison le plus décisif* for the invasion. However, not Islam but the commercial-imperial enterprise of the Arabs *über alles* was the *raison d'étre* behind the intentions to capture "the country of Hind to the boundary of China."[22] As far as the Arab occupation of Sind was concerned, conversion to Islam, though welcome, was largely an unintended consequence of the occupation. The Arab policy of conquest and settlement focussed on the capitulation of the Sindīs and not their conversion and there is no indication that the Arabs engaged in active proselytization of any kind, either coercive or peaceful.[23]

Thus, on an "auspicious day" in CE 711, as fixed by astrologers, Muḥammad ibn Qāsim started for Sindh at the head of 20,000 Iraqi, Syrian, and other Arab soldiers of fortune. The initial target was the coastal city of Daybul (also Debal), near present-day Karachi. According to the historian Bilādurī, "The town was thus taken by assault, and the carnage endured for three days…. and the priests of the temple were massacred."[24] "Muḥammad set the seal on the first stable Arab-Islamic conquest on Indian soil by having a mosque built and a new quarter founded where 4,000 Moslems were settled."[25] Later, as recorded by Bilādurī, 'Ambissa ibn Ishāk "knocked down the upper part of the minaret of the temple and converted it into a prison. At the same time he began to repair the ruined town with the stones of the minaret."[26] The conquest of Daybul was followed by the

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[15]Li 1996: 351.
[16]*Dhu'l Kifl* is mentioned twice in the *Qur'ān* (*Al-Anbiya* 85 and *Sad* 48) as virtuous and patient. According to Qadir, *Kifl* (=Kapil) is the Arabic rendition of *Kapilavastu*.
[17]This information on *Dhu'l Kifl* is drawn from Berzin nd.
[18]*Ibid.*
[19]Fredunbeg 1900: 45.
[20]Ibid.53-54.
[21]Gabrieli 1965: 283.
[22] Elliot and Dowson 1867: 188; Fredunbeg 1900: 126-127.
[23]The hypothesis of a holy war proposed by Dhar (1940: 597) and others must be rejected.
[24] Elliot and Dowson 1867: 120.
[25]Gabrieli 1965: 286.
[26]Elliot and Dowson 1867: 121.

peaceful capitulation of the Buddhist governors of Nīrūn and Sadūsān.[27] Then Siwistān (Sahbān) was conquered and 4,000 Jats were enlisted in the Arab army.[28] This was followed by a fierce battle with Rājā Dāhir Sen who died fighting valiantly[29] and the "Musulmāns glutted themselves with massacre."[30] With the death of Dāhir, indigenous resistance to the Arab invasion fell to pieces. Islamic sources tell of "a whole constellation of princes that more or less sincerely accepted Islam and considered themselves, or were considered, tributaries of the Caliphs."[31] The small Arab army Muḥammad ibn Qāsim had brought would not have sufficed for garrisoning a third part of Sind. Thus, he liberally enlisted in his army the local communities such as the Jats and the Meds. It was with this mixed force, in which the Arabs were a dominant minority, that he advanced towards Alor and defeated king Chach and the others to complete the annexation of Sind. According to an eye-witness account, by the end of 720s, the Arabs had 'ravaged' half of present day Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Sind.[32] Though the Arab conquering armies were usually smaller compared to those of their opponents and "appear to have enjoyed no important technological advantages in armament,"[33] they came out victoriously primarily because Dāhir and Chach along with their governors were fissiparous, their armed forces indisciplined, and large sections of their subjects, particularly the Buddhists and Jats, were disaffected.

When the Arabs invaded Sind, they primarily focussed on two things. First, they wanted to preserve the economic infrastructure of the region so that it could be exploited to the maximum extent possible. Second, they wanted to achieve the conquest of Sind with the least number of Arab casualties. Hence, when Sindī resistance was intensive or protracted, the Arab response was equally severe. As towns such as Daybul, Rāwar, Brāhmaṇābād, Iskalandah, and Multān had to be captured by force (*'anwatan*) resulting in considerable casualties on both sides, wholesale massacres of the vanquished took place. As compared to this, towns such as Armābīl, Nīrūn, Sīwistān, Budhīyah, Bét, Sāwandī, and Aror were brought under Arab control through treaty (*ṣulḥ*) and they did not experience any casualties, either Arab or Sindī.[34] In both cases, however, the Arab concern with securing a financially viable Sind impelled them to exempt artisans, merchants, and agriculturists.[35]

During his campaign in Sind, Qāsim had a clear mandate from Ḥajjāj: "Whoever refuses to submit to the power of Islām, let him be killed."[36] Thus, he vigorously put to death all enemy soldiers found in arms (*ahl-i-ḥarb*) and almost never made an exception to this rule. Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and the other Arab generals who followed him in Sind appear to have had no qualms in using the weapon of *jihād* on the battlefield particularly to fine-tune their war machinery. Thus, shortly before meeting Dāhir in the battlefield, Qāsim addressed his soldiers: "O people of Arabia, today is the day of trial. Try your best in the cause and for the sake of Islām, and use all your energy and zeal. Depend for protection and strength on the divine help and Grace so that you may drive away the infidels, and their kingdom may devolve upon you, and their wealth and country come into your possession…. and (remember, above all, that) if you turn your faces from the kāfirs, your souls will be in hell, and your ancestors will be ashamed of you."[37] Though the purpose of call to *jihād* was not exactly to convert the Sindī *kāfirs* to Islam, it certainly helped as a morale booster on the battlefield. And the Sindīs' war-cry to religion in the face the enemy was not as loud as the Arabs nor could they match the Arabs in dealing with Janus-faced allies. Alāfī's case is a quintessential example. When King Dāhir, who had given him asylum and who worked in his army, asked him for help against Qāsim, his submission was: "O king, as we are indebted to you for many an act of kindness, we are bound to give you good counsel. But we are Mussalmāns and will not draw our swords against, and fight with, the army of

[27] *Ibid.*121.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*122.
[31]Gabrieli 1965: 285.
[32]According to the Korean traveller Hye Ch'o (Chinese: Hui Zhao), who visited Sind between 724 and 727 CE, the Arabs controlled half of the territory of Western India and Sind. See Yang *et al* 1984: 44-45.
[33]Wink 1996: 8.
[34]Maclean 1989: 38. Fredunbeg 1900: 70.
[35]Wink 1996: 284.
[36]Fredunbeg 1900: 126.
[37]*Ibid.*101.

Islām. If, thus fighting, we are killed by the Mussalmāns, we die the death of polluted wretches; and if we kill them, we become responsible for their murder and our punishment will be the fire of hell…. So be kind enough to permit me to depart quietly."[38] And Dāhir let him go!

As pointed out above, the people of those cities and towns that had to be taken by force were subjected to massive slaughter and plunder.[39] Plundering and enslavement (slaves being an important raw material to be exchanged for processed goods) at such places was particularly severe not only because the coffers and harems of the Caliph needed regular replenishment but also because the "soldiers of Islām" had a vested interest in maximizing the size of the war booty to be siphoned back home. On occasions when Muḥammad ibn Qāsim lost a friend on the battlefield, he ordered "all the towns to be plundered and destroyed."[40] Thus, after massive massacre at Multān, he attacked its "beautifully decorated Temple of the Sun God. The image of the god [wa]s made of gold and adorned with precious ornaments"[41] whose "two eyes of red rubies"[42] which hypnotized Muḥammad ibn Qāsim "was removed to the public treasury; and the jewels and pearls obtained by plunder in the town of Multān together with other treasures, either exposed or buried, were all carried away."[43] Politically relevant temples i.e., temples patronized by an enemy ruler or a formerly loyal king who becomes a rebel, such temples were almost always wiped out. As a matter of fact, attacking an enemy king's royal temple was necessary to undermine that king's sovereign rule. Invariably, in place of the royal temple destroyed, a *jami' masjid* (chief mosque) was built and *khuṭbah* was read proclaiming the new ruler. Though this kind of practice was so well-established that it did not elicit much comment, it goes without saying that the desecration of royal temples surely must have been traumatic for the vanquished rulers, court and royal household workers, and the priests patronized by these rulers. Further, we have very little by way of vivid reports of trauma across the general population of Buddhists and Hindus caused by such slaughters and destruction. Also the near silence of the sources is bewildering about the suffering and humiliation faced by thousands of women and children snatched away from their kith and kin and transported to alien lands for sexual gratification.

Though the Arabs took their Islam seriously and a world free of *kāfirs* and idol-temples remained their stated Qur'ānic ideal, political and military power equations mostly kept them from actively pursuing such an agenda. Neither al-Ḥajjāj nor Qāsim had any definite blueprint to convert the Sindīs to Islam. In order to provide firmer roots to Arab rule in Sind, they appear to have just called upon the rulers and their henchmen to convert to Islam. Thus, Caliph Umar "wrote to the princes (of Hind) inviting them to become Musulmāns and submit to his authority, upon which they would be treated like all other Musulmāns. These princes had already heard of his promises, character, and creed, so Jaishiya and other princes turned Musulmāns, and took Arab names."[44] Muḥammad ibn Qāsim's primary goal was to focus on stability, loyalty, and revenue and for this he "saw clearly that his object would be best achieved by a mixture of conciliation and terrorism."[45] Further, he was also clear in his mind that "the goodwill, or at least the neutrality, of the people was an indispensable condition of success."[46] Qāsim's policy of stick and carrot succeeded in driving "a wedge between the government of Dāhir and the mass of the people, who gradually veered round to his side."[47] As soon as Muḥammad ibn Qāsim's military superiority became evident and he declared his intention to guarantee the privileges of the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical clergy, the priestly class and the non-political masses decided to throw in their lot with him. The Buddhists particularly showed a ready willingness to genuflection as "their ethics of nonviolence inclined them to welcome the

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[38]*Ibid*.95-96.

[39]For instance, apart from Daybul where the massacre continued for three days; 6,000 men at Rāwar; between 6000 and 26,000 at Brāhmaṇābād; 4,000 at Iskalandah; and 6,000 at Multān were put to death (See, Maclean 1989: 38).

[40] Fredunbeg 1900: 138.

[41]Li 1996: 347.

[42]Fredunbeg 1900: 140.

[43]*Ibid*.

[44] Elliot and Dowson 1867: 124-125.

[45]Habib 1981: 5-6.

[46]*Ibid*.14.

[47]*Ibid*.

invaders."[48] As indicated by Gabrieli, the Arabs were able to bring Sind under their control through "the introduction of a *modus vivendi* with Indian indigenous cults dictated by political motives and administrative shrewdness, perhaps, rather than by religious tolerance in the real sense. It was a principle corresponding, moreover, to that general adaptability and elasticity peculiar to Islam during its initial period of conquest. The hardening of such attitudes into harsh fanaticism was to come at a later stage."[49]

The Arabs brought with them to Sind a precedent for dealing with non-Muslims whereby the Zoroastrians (*majūs*) had been included into the category of *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book or scriptuaries), irrespective of the fact that they neither had any written scripture nor did they belong to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The scriptuaries, after capitulating to the Arabs, were granted the status of *ahl al-dhimmah* (people of the covenant of protection, in short *dhimmīs*). Such a status guaranteed a certain amount of Muslim non-interference in religious matters in return for carrying out a number of obligations analogous to such a status.[50] Since Hindus, Buddhists, and Jainas had their scriptures, it was not conceptually difficult for the Arabs to extend the Zoroastrian precedent to them as *ahl al-kitāb* and *dhimmīs* "even if they worshipped stocks and stones."[51] Though the military policy of the Arabs in Sind was to kill all those who put up resistance, Al-Ḥajjāj ordered that those who capitulated peacefully they be granted the status of *dhimmī* and none among them was to "be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion."[52] Basically, the Sindīs were given the choice between *jizyah* (poll tax) and Islam rather than sword and Islam. Under such an arrangement, all *dhimmī* adult males were required to pay a graded *jizyah*, *sine qua non* of the *dhimmī* status, in either cash or kind. Thus, Qāsim ordered that "those who are still inclined to be of their own faith, must put up with injuries (*gazand*) and tribute (*jizia*) to retain the religion of their fathers and grandfathers."[53] The *dhimmīs* were permitted to pray to their own deities, patronize their religious mendicants, celebrate religious festivals (*aʿyād*) and rituals (*marāsim*), and were even allowed to retain up to three percent of the principal of the *jizyah* for the priests or monks.[54] Moreover, religious mendicants were granted the right to seek donations from householders by going from door to door with a copper bowl.[55] Though the collection of *jizyah* was regular, other obligations appear to have been inconsistently enforced were more social and symbolic than enforceable and tangible in character.

The Arabs guaranteed the *dhimmī* status by making a legal contract (ʻ*ahd*) with any city that capitulated by treaty (*ṣulḥ*). More than 65% of the Sindī towns capitulated by treaty[56] and were granted the *dhimmī* status. Such a policy substantially reduced resistance to the Arab conquest of Sind. Strictly adhering to the Islamic law that, once granted, a contract was inviolable and indefeasible; it helped the Arabs in winning the trust of their new subjects. By virtue of their status, the *dhimmīs* were entitled to exemption from both the military service and *zakat* (tax levied on Muslim subjects). Muslim men could generally marry *dhimmī* women; however Islamic jurists rejected the possibility of any *dhimmī* man marrying a Muslim woman.[57] Within the Arab Empire, although the *dhimmīs* were allowed to perform their religious rituals, Muslims were equally free to ridicule their worship. Further, the *dhimmīs* were required to perform their rituals in a way not conspicuous to the Muslims. For example, loud prayers along with devices that made 'noise' (such as bells and conch-shells) were prohibited. There was also a ban on the display of non-Muslim religious symbols (such as statues and pictures) either on buildings or clothing (unless required for the purpose of identification of the *dhimmīs*). *Dhimmīs* were also required to seek permission to build or repair

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[48]Gier 2006.
[49]Gabrieli 1965: 288.
[50]Cahen 2002: 227-31.
[51]Fredunbeg 1900: 4.
[52]Elliot and Dowson 1867: 186.
[53]Fredunbeg 1900: 121-122.
[54]*Ibid.*124-125.
[55]*Ibid.*
[56]According to the *Chachnāmah*, whereas nine towns (Daybul, Sīsam, Rāwar, Bahrūr, Dahlīlah, Brāḥmaṇābād, Iskalandah, Sikkah, Multān) were taken by force, seventeen (Nīrūn, Sīwistān, Bandhān, Budhīyah, Bhaṭlūr, Bhattīyān, Ishbāhar, Bét, Qiṣṣah, Sūrtah, Sākrah, Brahmins, Sāwandī, Jattān, Sahtah, Aror, Bātīyah) capitulated to the Arabs without fighting (see Maclean 1989: 39).
[57]Friedmann 2003: 161; Lewis 1984: 27.

their places of worship. Moreover, they were not allowed to seek converts among Muslims whereas Muslims were free to proselytize among the *dhimmīs*. The *dhimmīs* were certainly perceived by Muslims as following inferior religions. Furthermore, not all local Arab officials were necessarily as tolerant as others. There were occasions when the *dhimmīs* were forced to put on special clothes so that they could be easily identified by the authorities and some harsh officials put a ban on the temple-building activities of these *dhimmīs* who otherwise had the freedom of worship. In sharp contrast to this, those who attended the Friday prayers at mosques were sometimes given monetary rewards. The major financial disability of the *dhimmīs* was the fact that if any member of a non-Muslim family converted to Islam, he was given the right to inherit all the property of his family. According to *Muwatta Imam Malik,* an account by Malik Ibn Anas, besides the *jizyah*, additional taxes were imposed on those *dhimmis* who travelled on business. "If, however, they trade in Muslim countries, coming and going in them, a tenth is taken from what they invest in such trade."[58] *Dhimmis* were also at the receiving end in cases that involved religious groups outside of their own community, or capital offences or threats to public order. Thus, the overall atmosphere of uncertainty, fear, discrimination, and inducement of those who actually experienced conversion must be taken into consideration. In such an atmosphere, regardless of what Arab policy may have been, some non-Muslims may have perceived conversion as a means to escape the uncertainties let loose by the initial conquest of Sind, while internally still holding on to their own faiths. However, the children of such crypto-Buddhists and Hindus, growing up in the external framework of Islam, became much more genuine than their parents in adopting the new religion.

The *jizyah* enforced was a graded tax, being heaviest on the elite and lightest on the poor.[59] "The first and highest class had to pay 48 dirhams of silver in weight per head. The second or the middle class, had to pay 24 dirhams in weight, and the third or the lowest class, had to pay 12 dirhams in weight only."[60] The importance of *dhimmīs* as a source of revenue for the Muslim community is best highlighted in a letter attributed to caliph Umar I and cited by Abu Yusūf, the famed jurist of the Ḥanafī School: "if we take *dhimmīs* and share them out, what will be left for the Muslims who come after us? By God, Muslims would not find a man to talk to and profit from his labors."[61] This indicates that at least during the initial stages of the occupation, the Arab imperialists were not very keen on proselytization as it would have substantially reduced their revenue. The *jizyah* levied on the *dhimmīs* was over and above the taxes that they had been already paying. In one of his letters, al-Ḥajjāj ordered Qāsim that besides *jizyah,* "those who remain in their own religion should be required to pay to the officers the usual tax from the income of their handicraft or cultivation."[62] Thus, as elsewhere in the Arab Empire, within Sind too, the *jizyah* along with the *kharāj* (land revenue) may have proven, both psychologically and financially, a "crushing burden for the non-Muslim peasantry who eked out a bare living in a subsistence economy."[63] The additional taxation was a critical factor that must have driven many impoverished *dhimmīs* to leave their religion and accept Islam.[64] Thus, the *jizyah* must be seen as a tax incentive for impoverished non-Muslims to convert to Islam. As advocated by Abu Yusūf, the chief *qāḍī* (Islamic judge) of Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809), failure to pay the *jizyah* could have serious consequences. This could invariably lead to the pledge of protection of a *dhimmī*'s life and property becoming void, with the *dhimmi* facing the alternatives of conversion, enslavement, death or imprisonment.[65] A *dhimmī* wishing to travel, had to carry a receipt as it could be demanded as proof that the *jizyah* had been paid and failure to produce it could result in severe punishment.

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[58] Book 17, Number 17.24.46. See Translation of Malik's *Muwatta* at http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/muwatta/ (retrieved 15 June 2016).
[59] Fredunbeg 1900: 121-122.
[60] *Ibid*.
[61] Lewis 1984: 30-31.
[62] Fredunbeg 1900: 128.
[63] Stillman 1979: 28.
[64] Lewis 1984: 17-18; Stillman 1979:18.
[65] *Ibid*.14-15.

As related in the *Chachnāmah*, Qāsim continued with the discriminatory practices of Dāhir against certain communities.[66] "He degraded the Jāts and the Lūhānahs and bound over their chiefs. He [ordered]… that they must walk about bareheaded and bare-footed; that, when going out of their houses, they must take dogs with them; that they must supply firewood to the ruler of Brāhmaṇābād."[67] Later in the year 840 CE, governor 'Amrān ibn Mūsa, ordered every Jat to carry a dog with him.[68] Interestingly, according to Bilādhurī, "The Indians afterwards made themselves masters of Sind, but they spared the mosque, and the Muhammadans used to meet in it on the Friday and pray for the Khalif."[69] Though immediate consequence of the conquest was that indigenous rulers and armies were replaced by alien rulers and armies, much of the government and bureaucracy were preserved. Despite the fact that Islam teaches the equality of all Muslims, the Arab Muslims held themselves in higher esteem than the non-Arab Muslims (*mawālīs*) and generally did not mix with them. Moreover, the Arabs generally established garrisons outside towns in the conquered territories, and had little interaction with the local *dhimmīs.* However, both the *mawālīs* and the *dhimmīs* were obligated to contribute their skills and services to the Arab Empire. On the whole, it may be said that in a modern sense if the *mawālīs* were not second-class citizens then the *dhimmīs* certainly were. During the Umayyad period (CE 661–750), the Arabs in Sind and elsewhere appear to have acted as if the *Qur'ān* was addressed, not to all men, but to the Arabs only. "Islam was in fact regarded as the property of the conquering aristocracy."[70] The Arab tribesmen considered the privileges that went with being a Muslim only reserved for them. "Although from the start there was some movement of the conquered into the community of the conquerors, the separation of Arabs from non-Arabs was a basic principle of the state established as a result of the conquests. This is clear both from the procedure which a non-Arab had to adopt in order to enter Islam and from the fact that there were, from time to time, official measures designed to prevent such changes of status. Islam was in fact regarded as the property of the conquering aristocracy."[71] Added to this, differing conceptions of filthiness and cleanliness must have made it difficult for the Arab Muslims and the newly converted Sindhīs to live together. Clearly, full membership of Islam was equated with possession of an Arab ethnic identity.[72] There is evidence that after the recall of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, the Indians 'rebelled and apostatized.'[73] This appears to have happened because at least some of the Indians had converted to Islam under trying conditions. And the conversion may have been brain-driven rather than heart-driven. Visible communities of converted Muslims, in the competitive political atmosphere fostered by the Arab state, must have brought others under some duress to convert. However, the entire process of conversion and Islamization, generally coming from among the ranks of Buddhists, was so gradual and slow– almost glacial and unconscious– that it is almost unperceivable.[74]

Most of the Buddhists appear to have had no problem in accepting the status of *dhimmī* as second-class, non-Muslim subjects of a state ruled by the Arabs. As the Hindus appear to have been less forthcoming in capitulation, they may have been treated more harshly than the Buddhists. Dhimmitude of the Buddhists definitely caused their conversion to Islam faster as compared to the Hindus. Moreover, many Buddhist merchants and artisans in Sind voluntarily converted to Islam as it made better business sense. "The success of Muslims attracted– even sometimes economically necessitated– conversion."[75] With the rise in competition from Muslim quarters, *dhimmī* merchants viewed change of religion as financially beneficial considering that in addition to the *jizyah*; they had to pay double duty on all goods. Muḥammad ibn Qāsim was in desperate need to raise as much money as possible to compensate al-Ḥajjāj for the enormous expenses incurred on his campaigns including those which had previously failed. He was able to accomplish this not only by means of the poll, land,

66 Fredunbeg 1900: 125-126
67 *Ibid*.32.
68 Elliot and Dowson 1867: 128.
69 *Ibid*.129.
70 Hawting 2000: 4.
71 *Ibid*.
72 Goldziher 2009: 101ff; Crone 1980: 49-57.
73 Mujeeb1967: 232; Elliot and Dowson 1867: 126.
74 See Scott and Marty 2004: 290-292.
75 Risso1995: 106.

and trade taxes, but also through the pilgrimage tax that the Buddhists and Hindus had to pay for visiting the shrines of their own religions. It is worthy of notice that the Buddhist monks of Sind, like their counterparts in Gandhāra, had the perverse practice of levying entry-fee on pilgrims for worshipping in their own temples. The Arabs were simply happy to take over the income. Thus, once peace was restored, the Arabs themselves were stakeholders in the preservation of those Buddhist and Hindu temples that generated revenue by attracting pilgrims. There were later Muslim rulers who were far more orthodox than Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, but they nevertheless conceded that Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists be allowed to live as *dhimmīs*. These rulers were restrained by the fact that, Ḥanafī clerics, barring a very few exceptions, were their chief religious advisors.[76] In any case, it would have been impossible for a Muslim ruler to enforce a stricter version of Islamic law on all the subjects whereby enforcing conversion, killing those who resisted, and then ruling over a bitter and suppressed majority. The very fact that Hindus continued to administer their villages and resolve all disputes in accordance with their own law, rationally precluding an absolute rule of *shari'ah* that an Islamic theocracy would have required. Thus, at the most Arab rule was theocentric, but not theocratic. Hindus and Buddhists were not only tolerated, but they were recruited into Qāsim's administration as trusted and dependable civil as well as military officials, a policy that would continue under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.[77] The Hindu Kaksa, the second most powerful person in Qāsim's government, took precedence in the army over all the nobles and commanders. He was not only in-charge of revenue collection and the treasury but also assisted Muḥammad ibn Qāsim in all of his undertakings.[78] But such *dhimmī* officials were often expected to turn Muslim. Thus, Sisākar (Dāhir's *wazir*) on whom Muhammad ibn Qāsim bestowed the office of *wazir,* "[b]y Muhammad Kásim's advice, he became a Mussulman."[79]

Though, at some places, such as Daybul and Nīrūn, Muḥammad ibn Qāsim "built mosques and minarets in place of idol-houses and temples,"[80] such incidents were rare and generally took place at the cutting edge of the invasion and during the initial stages of the occupation either to punish or deter opposition.[81] Of course, it is always possible for individual participants to have their personal agenda in such events. As a whole, as pointed out above, some Hindu temples and Buddhist *vihāras* located inside or near the royal palaces, besides being places of worship, were viewed as symbols of political power. Their destruction was politically, not religiously, motivated.

After having spent three years in Sind, Muḥammad ibn Qāsim was recalled and almost immediately, the local Hindu rulers regained control of most of their territories. In 724, Arab-led forces under the command of General Junaid recaptured Sind. However, Junaid was unable to capture any territory in Gujarat, Rajasthan, or West Punjab. As Governor of Sind, General Junaid continued the previous Arab policy of collecting the *jizyah* as well as pilgrimage tax from both the Hindus and Buddhists.[82] Although the Pratihāra rulers of West Punjab had the resources to expel the Arabs from Sind, yet they shied away from such an action. The Arabs had threatened to demolish the major places of worship if the Pratihāras attacked Sind.[83] Taking this fact into consideration the latter decided to maintain status quo indicating that the Arabs regarded the demolition of religious places of the non-Muslims as primarily an act of power politics. For over a century, Sind was ruled by governors appointed by the Umayyad and the Abbasid caliphs. Thereafter, like many of the outlying territories of the caliphate, Sind stopped following the diktats of Baghdad and consequently, one does not come across much mention of Sind in the Arab chronicles.

As members of Hinduism and Buddhism generally adopted diametrically opposite approaches towards the initial Arab conquest, they were affected differently by the invasion and occupation of

[76]Mujeeb1967: 58.
[77]N.F. Gier, *op. cit.*
[78]Elliot and Dowson 1867: 203. Fredunbeg 1900: 138.
[79]Elliot and Dowson 1867: 116.
[80]*Ibid.*144, 158.
[81]R.M. Eaton has suggested that acts of temple desecration were nearly invariably carried out by military officers or ruling authorities and they typically occurred on the cutting edge of a moving military frontier(see Eaton 2000: 108).
[82]Elliot and Dowson 1867: 125-126.
[83]Wink 1996: 201-205.

Sind. Whereas Buddhism disappeared completely as a viable religious system during the Arab period, Hinduism continued to survive into modern times. The primary sources indicate that the Buddhists tended to collaborate with the invading Arabs at an early date and more completely than did the Hindus.[84] Not only that nine out of the ten Buddhist communities mentioned by name in the primary sources were collaborators, in one case (the Nīrūnī Buddhists) envoys were sent to al-Ḥajjāj requesting a separate peace before the Thaqafite forces had even been dispatched to Sind.[85] However, it may not be correct to believe as does Friedman that Buddhist collaboration was simply opportunistic which was guided by "the desire to be on the winning side."[86] It is apparent from the narrative of *Chachnāmah* that the "Buddhists in Sind were guided not so much by motives of vengeance on the Hindus as by anxiety for their own safety."[87] If one were to go by information given in the *Chachnāmah* then the great majority of cases of Buddhist collaboration (e.g., Nīrūn, Bét, Sākrah, Sīwistān, Budhīyah) took place before there was any indication that the Arab side would be 'the winning side': they had only conquered portions of the Indus Delta, Dāhir and his large army were still intact, and the major and most productive part of Sind remained to be taken, Buddhists went out of their way to aid the Arabs in conditions of considerable personal jeopardy. The Sīwistān Buddhists, for example, not only went over to the Arabs before their town had been conquered, but they were later put in some peril when the loyalist forces of Chandrām Hālah retook the town and the Buddhists opted again for the Arabs, closing the gates of the city against Hālah during the ensuing battle.[88] However, this kind of approach on the part of the Buddhists must have acted as a halfway house in their ultimate embrace of Islam.

The Buddhists were disillusioned with the anti-mercantile policies of Dāhir and Chach and there is good reason to believe that the urban, mercantile Buddhists of Sind were not satisfied with their socio-economic situation. The incorporation of Sind into the Arab empire, a rapidly expanding trade empire, held out certain advantages to a mercantile people involved in interregional commerce: the reopening of the overland trade through Central Asia to China, the regularization of the disrupted maritime commerce (both Indic and Chinese) passing through Sind, and the access to the vital markets of the Middle East. As far as Sind was concerned, the Buddhist envoys from Nīrūn had been informed by al-Ḥajjāj before the conquest that the Arabs intended to subdue "the country of Hind to the boundary of China."[89] With their long history of trade relationships with Central Asia and China, the urban, mercantile Buddhists of Sind must have immediately realized the possibilities inherent for their class in the Arab eastern front and taken them into account in opting for collaboration. That is, urban, mercantile Buddhists may have hoped that the Arab conquest would reopen interregional trade routes, both maritime and overland, and hence benefit their class and, indirectly, their religion. Thus, they had good reason to perceive that their mercantile interests would be better served under an Arab trade empire.

However, the calculations of Buddhist merchants of Sindh went terribly wrong. Though the interregional commerce cycled through Sind did revive during the Arab period, it hardly helped them. The restored trade generally emphasized alternate trade routes, was supported by different institutions, and, most importantly, became the monopoly of a competitive urban, mercantile elite. This had a negative impact on those Sindī Buddhists who accumulated surplus, directly or indirectly, through inter-regional commerce. In addition, internal Buddhist industrial production at *vihāras* was supplanted by newly-built Arab industrial sectors. The Arabs built special industrial quarters within the Arab areas of Sind, to process material both for local consumption and for export. The ability of Buddhists to process goods of inter-regional trade was affected not only by the decline in their control of this commerce but also by the competition offered by the new Arab facilities. Further, Muslims, who were particularly urban in orientation during this period, displaced Buddhists as the dominant urban, mercantile class in Sind. Besides settling down in existing towns or expanding some of them

[84] Maclean 1989: 52. Scholars like Vaidya (2003: 173) and Banerji (1950: 237) view the Buddhists of Sind as the knaves who were responsible for "India's failure against Muslim invaders."
[85] See Maclean 1989: 51-52.
[86] Friedmann 1977: 326-27.
[87] Mitra 1954: 33.
[88] See Fredunbeg 1900: 87-88.
[89] Elliot and Dowson 1867: 188; Fredunbeg 1900: 126-127.

(e.g., Daybul), they also built new towns like Manṣūrah and Bayḍā’ completely replacing the old ones (e.g., Manṣūrah replacing Brāhmaṇābād) or bringing others to a state of decrepitude. Moreover, the pan-Islamic international trade network to which Sind had been linked by conquest was controlled by the Muslim mercantile bourgeoisie. Discriminatory customs regulations considerably reduced the capacity of the Buddhist merchants of Sind to compete at par with Muslims in large-scale inter-regional commerce.

After the Arab conquest, the major merchants of Sind belonged as well to the larger cosmopolitan Muslim bourgeoisie. While ordinary Muslims in Sind dressed like their compatriot non-Muslims, the merchants followed the fashions of Irāq and Fārs. This suggests that they were either drawn from these regions or, as is more likely, accepted the cultural dictates of the larger pan-Islamic mercantile community as their exemplar. They were in Sind, but not really part of it. “To participate in the new inter-regional trade was in many ways to become Arab, and if Arab then necessarily Muslim.”[90] As a result of these factors, Sindī Buddhist merchants found it increasingly difficult to compete with Muslim merchants on an equal footing in the revived commerce. And, as their share of the trade declined, so did their share of the accumulation of mercantile surpluses. “Where an individual or a group has a particular expectation and furthermore where this expectation is considered to be a proper state of affairs, and where something less than that expectation is fulfilled, we may speak of relative deprivation.”[91] The urban, mercantile Buddhists had collaborated with the Arabs under the expectation that the conquest would reinvigorate the economy of Sind and hence their share of the accumulation of capital. However, their share of the accumulation of capital decreased while commercial capital passing through Sind increased. The urban, mercantile Buddhists of Sind experienced relative deprivation and lost control of certain economic resources and capital which had previously belonged to them.[92] Moreover, as the accumulation of mercantile surpluses by the urban, mercantile Buddhists as well as their ability to allocate resources correspondingly declined, they could readily perceive the deterioration of their socioeconomic position in religious terms. They felt that their precarious condition was caused by the fact that they were non-Muslims whereas their Muslim counterparts were prospering for the simple fact that they were Muslims. Thus, it is no surprise that “the religious solution of converting to Islam would have been a plausible option among those urban, mercantile Buddhists experiencing relative deprivation in Arab Sind.”[93] In this context, conversion appears to be more of a historical process than simply an event whereby the urban, mercantile Buddhists tended to reorient themselves gradually to the milieu of their more successful class counterparts. It may be noted that the conversion of urban, mercantile Buddhists did not necessarily entail a sudden or dramatic change in the basic structure of their belief system. The Islamization of the Buddhist converts occurred gradually by way of such Muslim institutions as the mosque, the school system, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. During all this while, new Arab trade patterns which bypassed the credit and transport facilities of the *vihāras* must have considerably corroded the solid fiscal base of the Buddhist monastic system in Sind. Added to this, the decline in the Buddhist share of the accumulation of mercantile surpluses must have further aggravated the deterioration of Buddhist institutions. Moreover, the new rulers not only put a stop to the enjoyment of tax-free lands by *vihāras* belonging to the *kāfirs*, they also would not forego the revenues alienated by the earlier rulers. As a result of this and the reduced capacity of urban lay followers to provide economic assistance, *vihāras* fell into decay. The disintegration of the monastic system must have accelerated as the urban, mercantile Buddhists converted to Islam since continuous monetary support in sufficient quantities was needed to build and maintain the monastic structures and institutions. Some Buddhists may also have been assimilated and acculturated into Hinduism as the Sindī Buddhists largely belonged to the Saṃmitīya sect, whose emphasis on reality and on the importance of personality, brought them very close to the Hindu doctrine of metempsychosis, thus bridging the gulf in a later period.[94]

It appears that bulk of the Hindu peasantry from the countryside and mercantile Buddhists from the urban areas in Sind shifted their religious allegiance to Islam by about the end of the eighth

[90]Maclean 1989: 74.
[91]Aberle 1970: 209. Also see Runciman 1971: 304-305.
[92]Maclean 1989: 75.
[93]*Ibid*.76.
[94]Mitra 1954: 33.

century. While some Buddhist monks definitely emigrated from Sind to other parts of India during the Arab occupation, it is extremely unlikely that any large-scale migration took place. There is also no evidence in the sources to indicate that any of the Buddhists or low caste Hindus converted to Islam because it was allegedly a champion of egalitarianism or because it took up the cause of the so-called suppressed people of India who in turn embraced Islam for the sake of social justice. There is no evidence of a direct assault upon the caste system either from the Arab rulers of Sind or from the Arabs in general. As pointed out by Irfan Habib, there is no sign of commitment to any such equality in the writings of Islamic theologians and scholars of the medieval period. While Buddhists and Hindus were often denounced as *kāfirs* and image-worshippers, there is in the entire range of medieval Islamic literature no word of criticism on the plight of the *caṇḍālas* or the śūdras. "Indeed, the sanction for full-fledged slavery in Islamic law should strongly modify any attribution of equality to historical Islam."[95] There is not a single reference in Arabic or Persian literature to Buddhists actually living in Sind subsequent to the initial Thaqafite conquest. Al-Bīrūnī (973-1048), who visited Sind in 1030, was unable to locate either any Buddhist or a book on Buddhism in Sind for his encyclopaedic work on India, the *Kitāb tā'rīkh al-Hind*.[96] None of the surviving Buddhist structures in Sind were built after the Arab conquest or, with the exception of the stūpa at Mīrapur Khās (where Arab coins of an undetermined date have been found), can they be dated with confidence, by way of artefacts and debris, as inhabited after the eighth century. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Buddhism died out in Sind during the course of Arab rule; indeed the absence of Arab-period artefacts in Buddhist sites suggests a relatively early date for its institutional deterioration and demise.[97]

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[95]Habib 1996: 80.
[96]Sachau 1910: 249.
[97]Maclean 1989: 53. Also see Cousens 1925: 87, 93.

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